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WATCH.

Many things in this world tend to lull us asleep, or to throw us off our guard. We do not live like men whose hopes lie beyond the grave, and who find nothing here to give them rest and joy.

We forget that it is an evil world in which we live; and that throws us off our guard. We forget that, if we be Christ's, the world is our enemy, and that the god of this world hates us, and seeks our death; that throws us off our guard. We forget that death is near, and that the grave will ere long open to take us in; and that lulls us asleep. We forget that we have a race to run, a battle to fight, and a prize to win; we try to make earth look as bright as we can, and to make its pleasures taste as sweet as possible; we try to make ourselves believe that things are not so bad here as some think, that the wicked are not so very wicked, that the nations are not so forgetful of God, and that the Church is not so cold as is said. Thus we are thrown off our guard. We fold our hands, we sit down contented, and we fall asleep. It was in this state that the apostle seems to have found some of the early churches, for thus he writes—"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11).

But there is one thing which, more than all, we are forgetting, and that is,—the coming of the Lord. He has told us that He will come; He has warned us against sleeping, and He has commanded us to *Watch*. This, then, we would press upon you. Is yours a watchful

eye? Are you remembering the command—*Watch?*
WATCH? For whom? For the absent Bridegroom;
 for the coming Judge; for the expected King.

And who is he? One whose name is not strange to us; one whom we call Lord and Master, and who calls us brethren and friends. Jesus of Nazareth is he for whom we watch. We know Him as the man who died for us, and who is coming to glorify us. We know Him as the Word made flesh; the Incarnate One; the Lamb of God; the Bearer of our sins, under whose cross we took refuge from the wrath of God; by whose stripes we are healed; by whose suretiship we are set free; whose love is our joy and consolation; "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

WATCH! Why? For many reasons; but chiefly for the following:—

I. *He will certainly come.* That same Jesus who went up to heaven shall in like manner return (Acts i. 11). It is not more certain that He has come already, than that He will come again to this very earth, from which He ascended eighteen hundred years ago. The time may seem long. Scoffers may say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Unfaithful followers may say, "My Lord delayeth his coming." But HE WILL COME! No amount of enmity, and opposition, and scoffing, can prevent this. The day of the Lord will come! Man cannot hinder it; Satan cannot hinder it.

II. *He will come suddenly.* In an hour when we think not, He will come. He has kept the day and hour of His appearing a secret, that men may be kept always watching. He has not told us of any time that is to elapse ere He comes. He has not said, "You may be quite easy and contented about my coming, for it will not be for many hundreds or thousands of years." He always warns us to be ready, for He will come when we look not for Him. Like the swift burst of the

lightning-flash He will come. When men are eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, He will come! Oh, then, watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.

III. *He will come when the world is asleep.* Men will say to themselves, "Peace and safety—there is no danger." Some will say, "My Lord delayeth his coming." Others will say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Others will say, "There are no signs of His coming." Others will say, "He will not come till the whole world has been first converted." And thus they will "take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry." They will fall asleep; and then, when they are asleep, and dreaming of prosperous times, and gay hopes, and a happy world—then the trumpet sounds, the shout is heard, the Son of man is come! Where, then, are your lamps? Where is the oil? Where are your girded loins? Where is the ready haste to go forth to meet the Bridegroom? Oh, *watch!* "Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth!"

But what is He coming to do? Many things, the half of which we cannot here speak of; but chiefly such as these:—

I. *He comes to take up His saints* (1 Thess. iv. 16). It is for them, first of all, that He comes. He raises the dead saints, and changes the living ones, and then, by one glorious band, He takes them up into "the clouds," to meet Him in the air. Are you ready to meet Him? Are you longing to be thus caught up, and to be for ever with the Lord?

II. *He comes to take vengeance on them that know not God* (2 Thess. i. 8). When He comes, there will be little faith on the earth. Evil men will be waxing worse and worse. Antichrist will be at his height. All manner of sin will be flowing over the earth. He comes as the great Judge, to "judge the earth." He comes with His rod of iron, to smite the nations in pieces. He comes

in flaming fire, to burn up the ungodly. What a day of flame, and blood, and terror, and wailing will that be! Oh, world, how unready for that hour of woe!

III. *He comes to bind Satan* (Rev. xx. 1, 2). Satan has long gone to and fro through the earth, walking up and down in it (Job i. 7). He tempted our first parents, and led them into sin. Since that day he has been going about, with his angels, doing the same awful work, laying snares for men, and leading them captive at his will. But he will be bound when the Lord comes, and not be permitted to deceive the nations. This will be the bruising of the serpent's head. And how gladly should we long for the day of Satan's binding, knowing, as we do, his malice, his cunning, and his power!

IV. *He comes to make all things new.* Creation has long suffered for man's sin, and the curse has made it groan. Its cries are going up into the ears of the Lord God of hosts, and the day of its deliverance is coming. (Rom. viii. 19-23). He will then make this earth of ours like Paradise—a holy, happy, fruitful, glorious world.

V. *He comes to reign in righteousness* (Isa. xxiv. 23). He is the earth's true King, and never will it be blessed or holy till He comes to rule it. The best of kings have not been able to rule it aright, so as to establish peace, and order, and righteousness; but He will do all this: He is the righteous King, and He will make His kingdom, and all that dwell therein, righteous like Himself. He will make this earth new; and they that dwell in it shall be holy.

It is for the arrival of this King that we are to watch. Surely, in these last days, we should be awake, and on our guard. It is so long since He said, "Surely I come quickly," that His coming must now be very near.

Church of God! gird up thy loins; trim thy lamp; see that there is oil in thy vessels. The Lord is at hand. Put away sloth and vanity, and worldliness, and prepare to meet Him, that that day may not overtake

thee unawares. The world is fast ripening for wrath and shame,—art thou ripening for glory and the kingdom? Be holy, be prayerful, be loving, be zealous, be liberal, be generous. Heap not up treasure for the last days, but spend and be spent for God. Up from your couch! Have done with ease and sloth! Your King is already on His way, and these tossings of kingdoms are the sounds of His chariot-wheels. The world's last days have come. The rivers of earth are beginning to swell with the last sweeping flood. O gird up your loins! Enter your chambers. "The name of the Lord is your strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Poor world! what is to become of thee in that day? Thy day may seem at present bright and fair; but its end will be darkness, and storm, and woe! Man of the world! where is your wisdom, your foresight, your concern for the future? Are you blind? or are you resolved not to see what is coming on the earth? Is this heedlessness of yours worthy of an immortal being? Is it not madness? Pleasure! Where will it then be? Money! What will become of it? Mirth! What is its end? Child of vanity, lover of sin, captive of the devil, leave—leave that Egypt, that Babylon, that Sodom, in which thou hast so long dwelt, and escape for thy life. For the fire is about to be kindled, which shall burn them up; and wrath is coming, and the Judge is coming, and despair is coming. Oh, trifle not with time; trifle not with eternity; trifle not with the everlasting burnings! Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? To the last hour of earth's rebellious day Christ keeps open the gate, and sends out His welcome,—“I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (Rev. xxi. 6; xxii. 17). That fountain is not dried up in these last days. Its fulness is the same as at the first. You have been long of coming to it, but it still stands open,

and all its waters are free! To drink of it is to thirst no more. To drink of it is to be fully refreshed and satisfied. The gladness which it pours into the soul is more than words can tell; and it is the beginning of that endless gladness which is at God's right hand, in the kingdom hereafter.

This world has no fountains to which you can go. It has no living waters which might refresh your weary, thirsty spirit. It has nothing but its sands and rocks, its briars and thorns. For it is a desert. It has been so since man fell, and it never can be otherwise until all things are made new. But there are wells of living water set open for you in Him who came into this very world of yours, that He might bring to you all the fullness of the Father's love, and present to you all the peace of heaven, without price or money. Drink out of this open well. Drink, and you will find refreshment and joy.

But, remember—Christ is coming; and when He comes, this well of living waters will be closed against you. He comes to close it against all those who have refused the gospel of His love. Make haste, then; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee; when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for my soul trusteth in thee. Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

rejoice the
do I lift up my soul,
to forgive, and plenteous in
call upon thee. Teach me thy way, O Lord,
walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name.

I will praise thee, O Lord, for it is good, and praise is
comely. I will sing praises unto thy name, O Most
High! I will shew forth thy loving-kindness in the
morning, and thy faithfulness every night. While I live
I will bless the Lord, and will sing praise unto my God
while I have my being.

Thou art gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and
slow to wrath; abundant in goodness and truth, keeping
mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression,
and sin. O remember not against me former iniquities;
~~let thy tender mercy speedily prevent me.~~ Heal me,
and I shall be healed, for thou art my praise. Make thy
face to shine upon me, and be gracious to me; lift up
thy countenance upon me, and give me peace. O visit
me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy
chosen, and may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
and may glory with thine inheritance!

May the God of hope fill me with all joy and peace in
believing, that I may abound in hope through the power
of the Holy Ghost. The very God of peace sanctify
me wholly; and may my whole spirit, soul and body, be
preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus
Christ.

ing,
to keep;
Lamps be always burning,
I let us watch while others sleep;
We're no longer of the night,
We are children of the light.

Being of the blessed number
Whom the Saviour calls His own,
'Tis not meet that we should slumber
When the night is almost gone,
And from heaven is heard the cry
Which proclaims the Bridegroom nigh.

HYMN.

When heaves with sighs my anxious breast,
In doubt if grace hath made me free,
A still small voice yet whispers sweet—
And this is happiness for me.

When earth and hell, and this vile heart,
To wound, destroy my soul agree,
Through grace I act the conqueror's part—
And this is happiness for me.

Wounded, perplex'd, hardly bested,
While from temptation's force I flee,
God in the battle shields my head—
And this is happiness for me.

When the cold dews of sorrow
This poor struggling soul agone,
My fainting soul renew—
This will be happiness for me.

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